

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 008162

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR INR/R/MR; IIP/RW; IIP/RNY; BBG/VOA; IIP/WEU; AF/PA; EUR/WE /P/SP; D/C (MCCOO); EUR/PA; INR/P; INR/EUC; PM; OSC ISA FOR ILN; NEA; WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC/WEUROPE; DOC FOR ITA/EUR/FR AND PASS USTR/PA; USINCEUR FOR PAO; NATO/PA; MOSCOW/PA; ROME/PA; USVIENNA FOR USDEL OSCE.

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [FR](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - Iraq Alleged CIA Prisons

Israel - Shimon Peres Leaves His Party

PARIS - Thursday, December 01, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

Iraq

Alleged CIA Prisons

Israel - Shimon Peres Leaves His Party

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

The reversal of a controversial decision in a pedophile trial and the unprecedented 'mea culpa' from the Prosecutor to the falsely accused are today's lead stories in practically every outlet, except for the economic and financial press which devotes its lead to a decision by the government that will allow the national Post Office to compete with commercial banks in providing banking services.

Iraq and the President's latest speech where he "rejected the idea of a troop withdrawal calendar" is reported in Liberation and Le Figaro which also carries an op-ed titled "Iraq: A Turning Point in the Fight Against Terrorism." For Jacques Amalric in Liberation, "President Bush is a revisionist." (See Part C)

Le Figaro carries an interview of Iraqi Foreign Affairs Minister Hoshyar Zebari: "The withdrawal of American troops is tied to the country's stability. They cannot leave before the country is stabilized. And stabilization will depend on the training of the Iraqi security forces. I know this is a controversial issue. But we need to remain firm and determined. The coming months will be critical for Iraq." Le Monde also reports Zebari's remarks from his press conference: "Because of persisting border crossings from Syria, establishing a schedule for the withdrawal of troops from Iraq is not pertinent at this time."

Allegations about CIA "secret prisons" lead Le Monde to report: "Washington is expected to give explanations." (See Part C) France Soir, which uses the same headline, "Washington Will Give Explanations," interviews former CIA chief in Paris, Charles Cogan: "I know the Washington Post journalist who broke the story. She has assured me that everything was indeed true. Physical abuse of prisoners has taken place in Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib. We were all convinced that there were WMD in Iraq. Including the French. But we had no proof. Both these incidents have tarnished our reputation. In addition, the invasion of Iraq has triggered the fury of the Arab world and is damaging the image of the United States."

The televised interview of Interior Minister Villepin on CNN Tuesday is the subject of several commentaries. For Le Monde Villepin is "explaining France to the Americans." The article concludes: "On Iraq, as on the rest, Villepin was not ready to tone down his differences of opinion with the Americans, which he defended at the UN in February 2003." In La Croix, Pierre-Yves Le Priol writes: "This was a delicate exercise, in English, one France will have to submit to more and more. Behind Amanpour's questions, one could detect to what extent France's image was affected by television shots that have left a caricature as vision of our country."

Shimon Peres's departure from the Labor Party to join Ariel Sharon's new centrist party is widely reported. For Liberation "Sharon is made of stainless steel." (See Part C)

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

Iraq

"Revisionism According to Bush"

Jacques Amalric in left-of-center Liberation (12/01):

"Revisionism is in. But no one expected Bush to be among the revisionists. In his speech on November 11 he said it as 'irresponsible to rewrite history about the start of the war in Iraq.' A few days later Vice President Cheney also accused the Democrats of revisionism. In trying to submit proof to

support his position, President Bush, like Dick Cheney, is exposing himself to the same accusations he is making of others: it is somewhat revisionist to claim that the Senatorial commission found no proof, when in fact it did not have access to the necessary archives. and because it is a lie to claim that 'more than a hundred Senators and Democrats' had access to the same documents as the President. With Congress back in session this week, we can expect new revisionists attempts from the President. The U.S. President is losing his credibility."

"Bush Defends his 'Strategy for Victory.'"

Philippe Gelie in right-of-center *Le Figaro* (12/01): "Just like Lyndon Johnson during the darkest hours of the war in Vietnam, George Bush now only speaks to the military or to his supporters. Yesterday the President, overwhelmed by criticism, again chose to speak to a uniformed audience to launch his new campaign to explain the war in Iraq to the American public. This speech, the first in a series that will be given until the elections in Iraq on December 15, did not provide new information but marks a turning point in the White House's approach. For the first time since the invasion of Iraq 32 months ago, Bush is attempting to present a coherent strategy, a certain degree of transparency and even a measure of modesty to persuade his fellow citizens to be patient."

"Iraq: A Turning Point In the Fight Against Terrorism."

Alexander Adler in right-of-center *Le Figaro* (12/01): "The military operations in Afghanistan and in Iraq do not constitute victories for the Americans. they were more political than military. In spite of the blows that the American army has been able to inflict on the Iraqi jihad along the Syrian border, it is in the purely political arena that the war against terrorism has taken a turn. The question is will Bush be able to come to an understanding with the Iranian elite in time to create a favorable political climate in Iraq before Congress and the pacifist American intelligentsia succeed in completely paralyzing America's capacity to carry on the war?"

Alleged CIA Prisons

"Washington Will Give Explanations on CIA Activities in Europe."

Corine Lesnes in left-of-center *Le Monde* (12/01): "Jack Straw wrote to Secretary Rice on Tuesday to ask for clarification concerning the 'allegations that the CIA set up terrorist camps in Eastern Europe.' The Europeans are waiting for a reaction from the American authorities. These have not yet formally denied the accusations. The existence of 'black sites' where 'phantom' detainees might be incarcerated has not been proven to date. But Human Rights Watch has proof of the CIA using several European airports for transit of aircraft going or coming from Guantanamo. The Europeans consider that the stopovers, if they are confirmed, are a violation of the EU's founding values."

Israel - Shimon Peres Leaves His Party

"A Stainless Steel Politician"

Didier Francois in left-of-center *Liberation* (12/01): "The political earthquake triggered by Sharon's departure from the Likud has just triggered a mirror reaction in Israel's left with Shimon Peres's decision to join Sharon. After much hesitation, and seeing that Amir Peretz was not making any overtures, Peres has decided to reclaim his freedom of action. While he has not formally joined Sharon's new party, he has given him his support and signaled his intention of 'supporting the coalition' for peace. This pacifist support for Sharon, coming from an emblematic figure, who has openly been supportive of a territorial compromise with the Palestinians, will undoubtedly complicate the task of the new leader of the Israeli left. while helping Sharon who has openly been courting Peres." STAPLETON